

# SMOKE ALARMS



*Obey the Law  
Save Your Life!*



**FAIRFAX COUNTY  
FIRE AND RESCUE DEPARTMENT**

# Smoke Alarms Can Save Your Life –

## *Obey the Law*

### How do we know that smoke alarms can save lives?

It's a proven fact. Smoke alarms installed and maintained properly can double your chances of surviving a fire.

- According to the National Fire Protection Association, in 2003, there were 388,500 reported home fires in the United States, resulting in 3,145 deaths, 13,650 injuries and \$5.9 billion in direct property damage.
- Nationwide, there was a civilian home fire death every three hours.

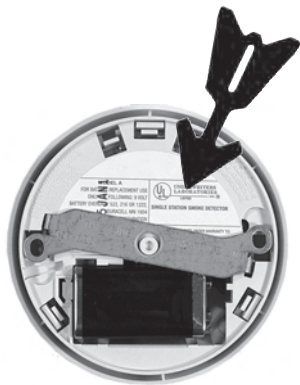
Early warning systems, such as smoke alarms, could statistically save **half** of these lives and greatly reduce property damage.

Approximately 80 percent of all fire deaths in the United States occur in the home. Fatal residential fires most often occur at night when residents are sleeping. In most cases, the best way to survive a residential fire is early fire detection and rapid escape to a safe area.

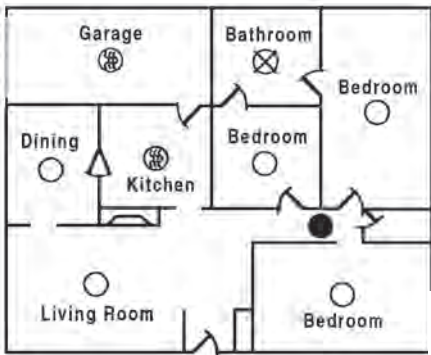
During fiscal year 2006 (July 1, 2005 - June 30, 2006), the Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department responded to 101 residential fires where people were alerted by smoke alarms and escaped safely.

# Installation Tips

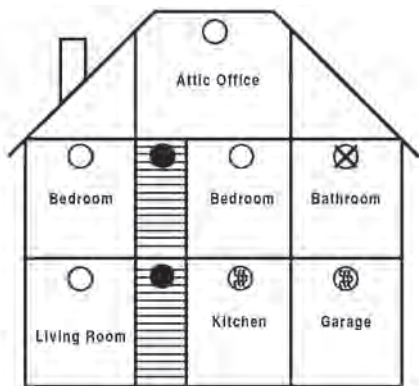
- Choose a smoke alarm that bears the label of a recognized testing laboratory.



- Install smoke alarms on every level of the home and outside all sleeping areas.



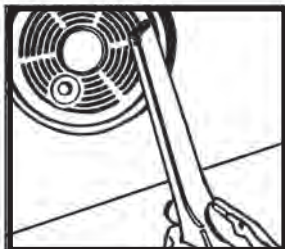
- For added safety, install smoke alarms in every room where people sleep.



- To increase safety, have a qualified electrician install hard-wired, interconnected smoke alarms so that when one sounds, they all sound.

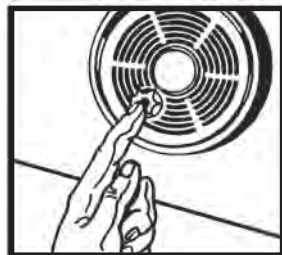
# Smoke Alarm Maintenance

Routine maintenance includes three basic steps: vacuuming, testing and changing the battery.



- Clean the smoke alarm monthly by gently vacuuming to remove dust and cobwebs allowing proper air flow through all vents.

- Test the smoke alarm every month following the procedures recommended by the manufacturer.



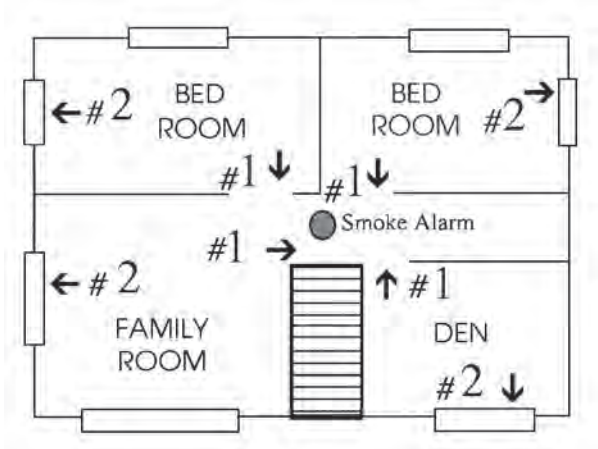
- Replace the battery annually. An easy way to remember this is to change the battery every fall at the same time that you change your clocks back for daylight savings time.
- Replace smoke alarms that use extended-life, lithium batteries when the alarm “chirps” or fails to respond to periodic testing. The batteries in these units cannot be replaced.
- Replace all smoke alarms when they reach 10 years old.

# Plan your Escape

Once a fire starts, it spreads rapidly. You may have only seconds to get out. Normal exits may be blocked by smoke, heat and/or fire. It is important that everyone knows what to do.

Plan two exits from every room. All family members should know all escape routes. Choose a meeting place outside the residence so you will know everyone has escaped. Practice escaping to test your plan before a real emergency.

If there is a need for immediate escape, don't waste time trying to fight the fire, and don't stop to call the fire department from inside the house. Get out and call 911 from a neighbor's phone or from another safe location. Staying in the house to call may cost you your life!



## EMERGENCY DIAL 911

Non-Emergency Assistance  
703-691-2131

# Smoke Alarms Save Lives; And It's the Law

**Effective March 1, 1985**, all homes and residential buildings with one or more dwelling units, including single-family homes, highrise apartments and condominiums, must have smoke alarms outside sleeping areas and in the basement. This applies to those buildings and/or units that change hands after March 1, 1985. If a house is sold, rented or leased after March 1, 1985, it must have smoke alarm(s) in place and working properly. The ordinance requires the owner of the dwelling, or the owner's agent, to maintain the smoke alarms in good working order. The **tenant** is responsible for reasonable care (including changing the battery) and for interim testing of all alarms. The tenant must provide written notice to the owner, or the owner's agent, for repair of any malfunctioning alarms. Concerns about compliance with the law should be directed to the Fairfax County Residential Inspections Division at 703-631-5101 or the Fire Marshal's office at 703-246-4849.

## ARTICLE 4.

### *Smoke Detectors.*<sup>3</sup>

#### **Section 61-4-1. Scope.**

In addition to the requirements of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code (VUSBC), and in accordance with authority provided by *Code of Virginia*, Section 15.1-29.9, the provisions of this Article shall govern the installation and maintenance of smoke detectors. (9-84-61; 29-84-61; 23-94-61.) **Section 61-4-2.**

**Where required.** Smoke detectors shall be installed in the following structures:

- (a) All buildings containing one (1) or more dwelling units.
- (b) Hotels or motels regularly used, offered for, or intended to be used to provide overnight sleeping accommodations for one (1) or more persons.
- (c) Rooming houses regularly used, offered for, or intended to be used to provide overnight sleeping accommodations. (9-84-61; 23-94-61.)

**3. Editor's note**—Ord. No. 29-84-61, which amended §§ 61-4-3, and 61-6-4, added § 61-4-3.1, becomes effective March 1, 1985.

### **Section 61-4-3. Installation requirements.**

(a) Smoke detectors installed pursuant to this Article shall be installed in conformance with the provisions of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. The smoke detectors required under this Article shall be either battery-operated or AC powered units as specified by the provisions of the VUSBC.

(b) Appropriate permits as required must be secured for the installation of the smoke detectors powered by alternating current; however, no fee will be charged for the permit.

(c) The smoke detectors shall be installed in locations specified in the applicable sections of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code. (23-94-61.)

### **Section 61-4-4. Responsibilities for rented or leased units.**

The owner of any unit which is rented or leased, at the beginning of each tenancy and at least annually thereafter, shall furnish the tenant with a certificate that all required smoke detectors are present, have been inspected, and are in good working order. Except for smoke detectors located in hallways, stairwells, and other public or common areas of multi-family buildings, interim testing, repair, and maintenance of smoke detectors in rented or leased units shall be the responsibility of the tenant; however, the owner shall be obligated to service, repair or replace any malfunctioning smoke detectors within five (5) days of receipt of written notice from the tenant that such smoke detector is in need of service, repair, or replacement. (23-94-61.)

### **Section 61-4-5. Enforcement.**

The Building Official, or the Building Official's duly authorized representative, is authorized to administer and enforce this Article. (29-84-61; 23-94-61.)

### **Section 61-4-6. Relationship to other codes.**

Nothing in this Article shall excuse any building owner from compliance with all other applicable provisions of the Virginia Uniform Statewide Building Code and the Code of the County of Fairfax. (9-84-61; 23-94-61.)

# HOME FIRE SAFETY SURVEY

This form is designed to help you check your home for fire hazards. All the questions are worded so a "YES" answer means the area is safe. A "NO" answer means a fire hazard exists and needs to be corrected. If you have any questions about how to correct a hazard, call your local fire station or the Public Information and Life Safety Education Section at 703-246-3801 or TTY 711 for assistance.

## HEATING HAZARDS:

**YES**

**NO**

- Combustibles like clothes, curtains and furniture are away from fireplaces and space heaters. \_\_\_\_\_
- Heating appliances are tested every year. \_\_\_\_\_
- There is a screen in front of the fireplace. \_\_\_\_\_
- Ashes are emptied into covered metal containers. \_\_\_\_\_
- All alternative heating devices used are U.L. listed. \_\_\_\_\_

## ELECTRICAL HAZARDS:

**YES**

**NO**

- Electric cords are checked to be sure they are not worn, frayed, or damaged. \_\_\_\_\_
- Extension cords are not run under rugs, over nails, through water, or across passageways. \_\_\_\_\_
- Proper size fuses are used in all sockets. \_\_\_\_\_
- Each circuit is properly marked. \_\_\_\_\_
- Electrical outlets are not overloaded by multiple plug devices. \_\_\_\_\_
- Electric appliances are not used near water. \_\_\_\_\_

## GENERAL HOUSEKEEPING HAZARDS:

**YES**

**NO**

- Closets, basements, attics, and garage areas are clean of old paper, boxes, paint cans, and other trash. \_\_\_\_\_
- Rubbish is thrown away regularly. \_\_\_\_\_



- Everyone in the family knows NOT to use a flammable liquid, like gasoline, for cleaning.
- Flammable liquids and oily rags are disposed of after use or stored in a tightly closed metal container.
- All combustibles (bags, boxes, and newspapers) are stored a safe distance away from any possible heat source (furnace, hot water heater.)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### **SMOKING HAZARDS:**

**YES**

**NO**

- Matches and lighters are kept out of the reach of children.
- Smokers use ashtrays that are large, deep, and designed for use with smoking materials.

_____	_____
_____	_____

### **KITCHEN HAZARDS:**

**YES**

**NO**

- The kitchen is kept clean all the time.
- The stove and oven are in good working condition.
- The stove area is kept clean and free of grease.
- Combustible materials (like towels and pot holders) are kept away from open flames and heat sources.
- Someone is always in the kitchen when food is cooking.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

### **GENERAL FIRE SAFETY:**

**YES**

**NO**

- The house address is clearly posted in large numbers that are easy to read from the street.
- There is a working smoke alarm near the sleeping areas.
- There is a working smoke alarm on every level.

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

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# Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Stations

Station	Location	Telephone
* 1	McLean	703-356-6671
* 2	Vienna	703-938-2242
4	Herndon	703-437-1233
* 5	Franconia	703-971-5858
* 8	Annandale	703-256-2552
9	Mount Vernon	703-780-0150
* 10	Bailey's Crossroads	703-820-2345
11	Penn Daw	703-765-4404
* 12	Great Falls	703-759-2300
* 13	Dunn Loring	703-560-1539
* 14	Burke	703-978-9200
15	Chantilly	703-378-5353
16	Clifton	703-830-1901
* 17	Centreville	703-830-8280
18	Jefferson	703-573-4505
* 19	Lorton	703-339-5141
20	Gunston	703-339-5970
* 21	Fair Oaks	703-591-0247
* 22	Springfield	703-451-0120
* 23	West Annandale	703-978-3340
24	Woodlawn	703-780-0110
25	Reston	703-437-7575
26	Edsal Road	703-256-2236
27	West Springfield	703-451-0453
28	Seven Corners	703-532-1451
29	Tysons Corner	703-893-0140
30	Merrifield	703-573-5321
31	Fox Mill	703-860-2680
32	Fairview	703-250-8900
34	Oakton	703-591-0273
35	Pohick	703-451-5500
36	Frying Pan	703-793-0043
* 37	Kingstowne	703-719-9294
* 38	West Centreville	703-802-2806
39	North Point	703-433-1418
40	Fairfax Center	703-322-4500
41	Crosspointe	703-493-8990
42	Wolftrap	Planning/In Design

\*Volunteer Departments affiliated with these stations.

# Program Information

Assistance is available to County residents through the following programs:

- **Get Alarmed** – provides smoke alarms to those who would not otherwise have them.
- **Battery for Life** – provides free smoke alarm batteries.
- **Visual Smoke Alarms**– a loan program for the deaf and hard of hearing to those who would not otherwise have them.

Fairfax County is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all county programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations upon request to request special accommodations call the Public Information and Life Safety Education at 703-246-3801 or TTY 711. Please allow seven working days in advance of the event in order to make the necessary arrangements. You can also contact the department through our web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fire)



*A publication of Fairfax County, Virginia*

April 2007